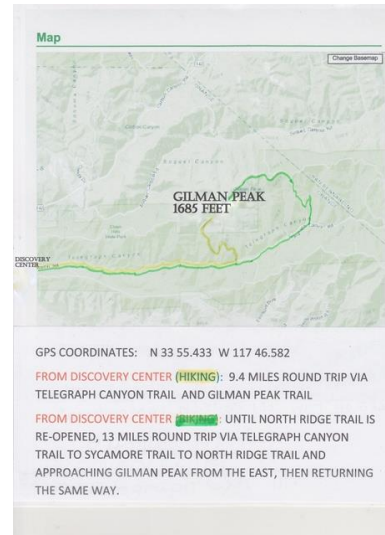
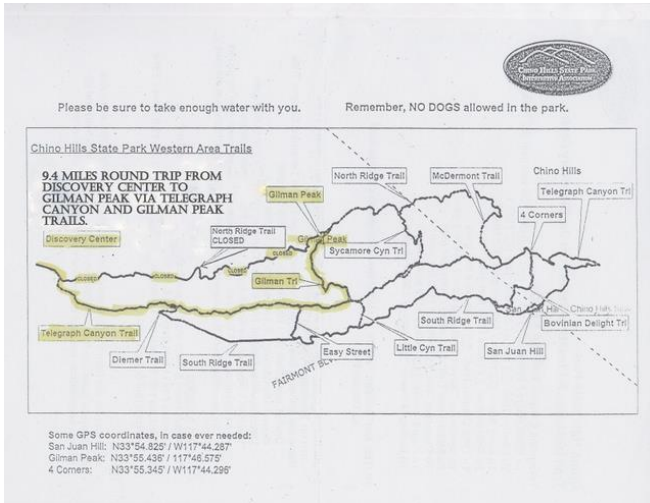


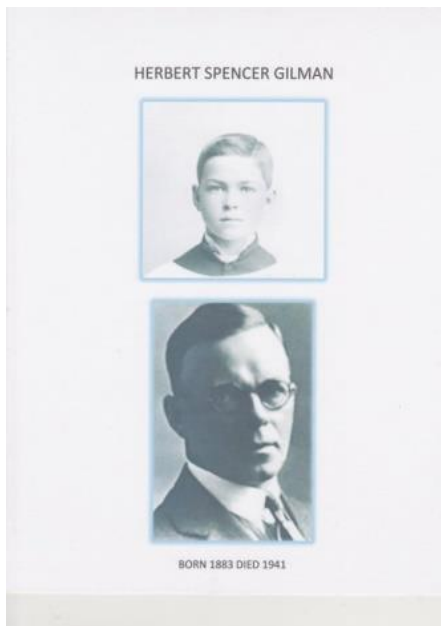
A Chapter in Gilman Peak History

By Volunteer Barbara Deck

At 1685 feet elevation, Gilman Peak is the 2nd tallest peak in Chino Hills State Park after San Juan Hill.

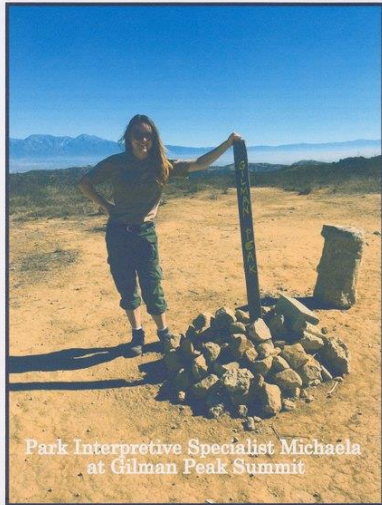


Gilman Peak is named after a gentleman named Herbert Spencer Gilman, commonly known as H. S. Gilman, who was born in Minnesota in 1883 and came to California in 1908, settling in San Dimas.



After buying a 10-acre orange grove, he developed an interest in the problem of irrigation and became president of the San Dimas Water Company, a position he held for three years. He eventually went on to become manager of two San Dimas Water Companies, was southern California's representative on the State Board of Forestry under 3 governors, and was one of California's foremost conservationists. During his lifetime, he served as director of the San Dimas Orange Grower's Association, the San Dimas Fruit Exchange, and the San Dimas Chamber of

Commerce. Mr. Gilman died in Los Angeles in 1941 at the age of 57.



There's not much at the top of Gilman Peak now, except for occasional hikers and bikers; but, if you had visited the peak between 1935 and 1966, you would have seen an operating fire lookout tower, one of roughly 600 in use in California alone at that time whose purpose it was to aid in fire detection and firefighting efforts.

Although there had been SOME fire lookouts in California since as early as 1876, they really came into play in the 1930s when forestry departments were determined to put a fire lookout on top of every mountain to protect valuable timber resources.

It was also the time of the Great Depression.

President Franklin Roosevelt, in an effort to put the unemployed young people and WWI veterans back to work, established labor work forces such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCCs).

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

The Civilian Conservation Corps was the most popular of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's programs to provide recovery from the Great Depression. From 1933 to 1942, the CCC put some two million young men to work on a massive building program in America's parks and forests. Roads and trails, campsites and social halls, amphitheaters, fire lookout towers, and visitor centers were constructed by the CCC. The CCC men were not only earning a living, they were doing something important for their country.

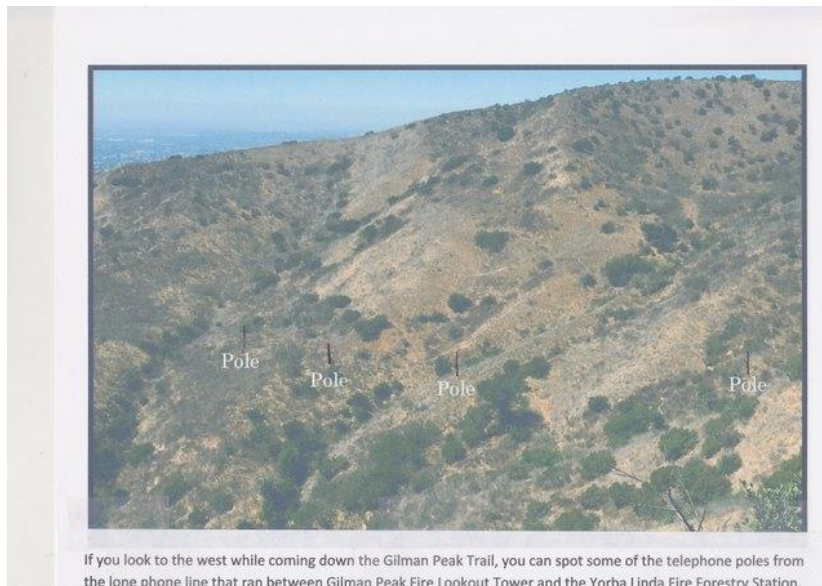


Gilman Peak Lookout Site
US 1711, CA 18



The CCCs were responsible for building the many fire lookout towers as well as creating fire breaks, access roads, and trails, laying telephone lines, and much more. In California alone, about 250 lookout towers were built by CCC workers between 1933 and 1942.

So, in June 1935, plans were completed with the State Division of Forestry for the construction of a lookout tower atop Gilman Peak and, in early September, for a telephone line between the Yorba Linda state fire station and the Gilman Peak lookout.

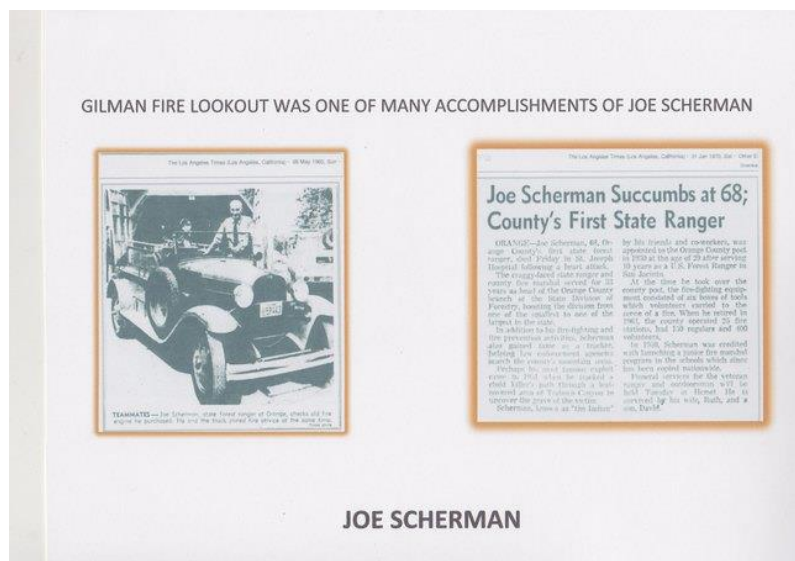


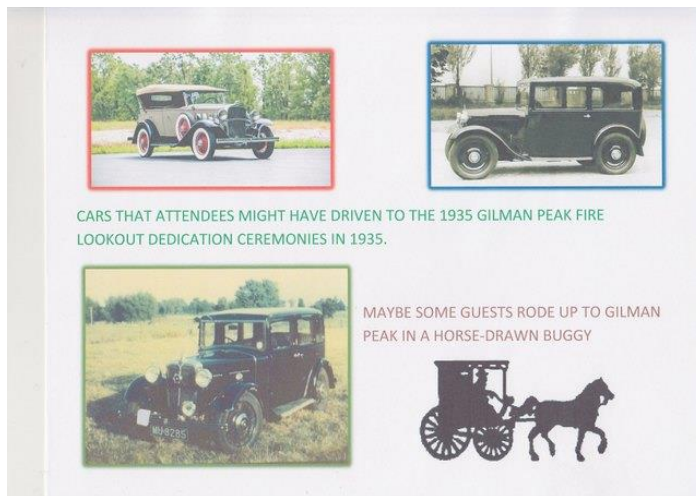
largest in the state.

The Gilman Peak Lookout Tower was completed in just 6 weeks, and a dedication ceremony was scheduled for the afternoon of Saturday, Sept. 21, 1935. Announcements appeared in the newspapers with a “cordial invitation” extended to any members of the public

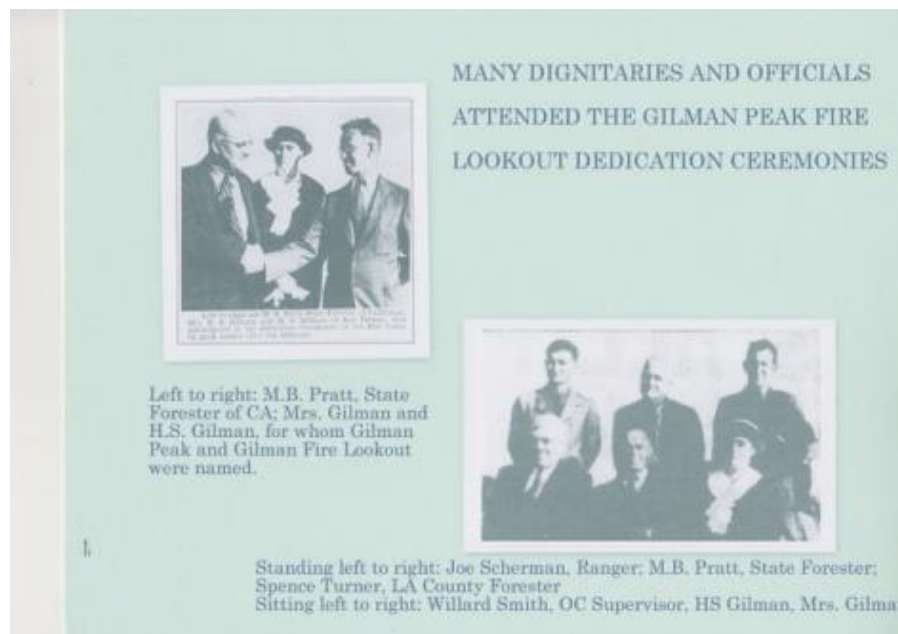
who wanted to come. They were given directions on how to reach the tower from the town of Olinda which, at that time, was situated just to the west of here in the area of Carbon Canyon Regional Park and Olinda Historic Museum. They were told to “drive through Olinda up Carbon Canyon three-fourths of a mile to Telegraph Canyon, and turn right, and after following that canyon about three-fourths of a mile, turn left up the hill to the tower.” We think that would have had them driving up the present-day North Ridge Trail.

The fire lookout tower was one of the many accomplishments of Joe Scherman, Orange County’s first state ranger and county fire marshal from 1930-1963. He is credited with boosting Orange County’s forestry division from one of the smallest to one of the



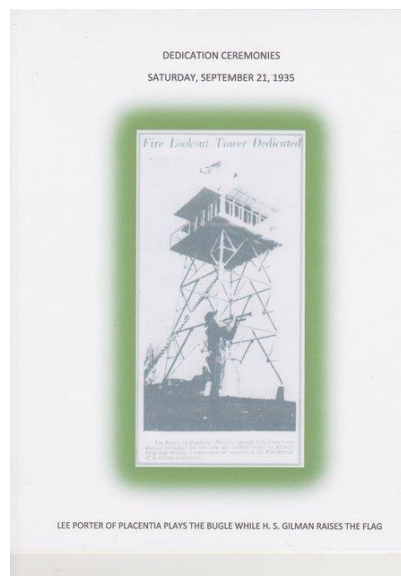


So the dedication ceremony was a pretty big deal. There were an abundance of dignitaries and speakers present for the impressive dedication festivities. Master of ceremonies was John Ostermann, president of the Orange County Forest Protective Association.



The tower was dedicated to H. S. Gilman and would be named the Gilman Peak Fire Lookout Tower. The dedication speech was given by M.B. Pratt, State Forester. The flag on the tower was raised by Mr. Gilman, himself, as lucky 12-year-old

Lee Porter of Placentia played the year resident of Carbon Canyon, spoke of all the fires he had canyon over the years, when no combatting them was provided. about the value of the tower in watersheds and range land where head of cattle roamed. B. Wyatt, charge of the construction introduced the CCC workers from



bugle. A 50-Edward Gains, witnessed in the means of Officials talked preserving the thousands of superintendent in project, also Camp Tuna in Los

Angeles, who had constructed the tower. Ranger Joe Scherman was also in attendance.

The new lookout tower (US 1711, CA 18) was made of steel. The tower and cabin cost about \$2400, and the cost of the phone line from the tower to the Yorba Linda forestry station was \$1200. The lookout had all the latest equipment and modern construction along with a view of 423 square miles of territory in Orange, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles counties, would operate during the fire season. It would actually be one of three fire lookout towers in this area, the other two being on Bolero Peak in Modjeska Canyon and on Santiago Peak in Cleveland National Forest.

The first lookout to man the fire tower was a person named Buell Castile, who must have been there only a short time because, in July 1936, it was announced that Harvey George French had been appointed as fire lookout in the Gilman Peak Tower. Harvey had just graduated from Fullerton High School before starting with the California Division of Forestry as a seasonal employee. In 1942, Harvey joined the Marines for 4 years. Upon returning to the Division of Forestry, he was promoted to Captain, and then Battalion Chief for the Perris and Elsinore areas. He ended up serving 34 years in the Fire Department, retiring from the California Department of Forestry and Fire in 1974. Harvey just passed away in 2011.

Fire lookout towers carried with them a real sense of fascination for many people. There were frequent articles in the newspapers, featuring the lives of various fire lookouts. The typical fire lookout tower consisted of a small room, known as a cab, located atop a large steel or wooden tower. The cab, itself, was usually about 14' x 14'. There was no electricity, no running water, and no plumbing. They were pretty primitive and isolated.

Another of Gilman Peak's lookouts was a gentleman named Glenn Downer who, along

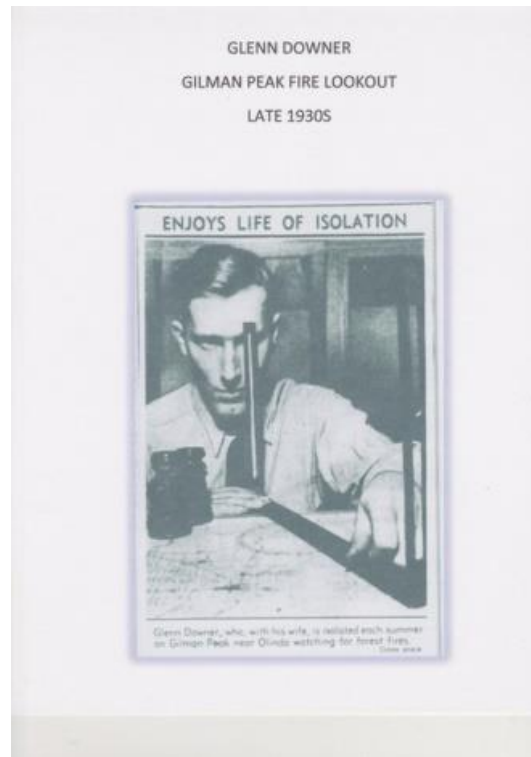
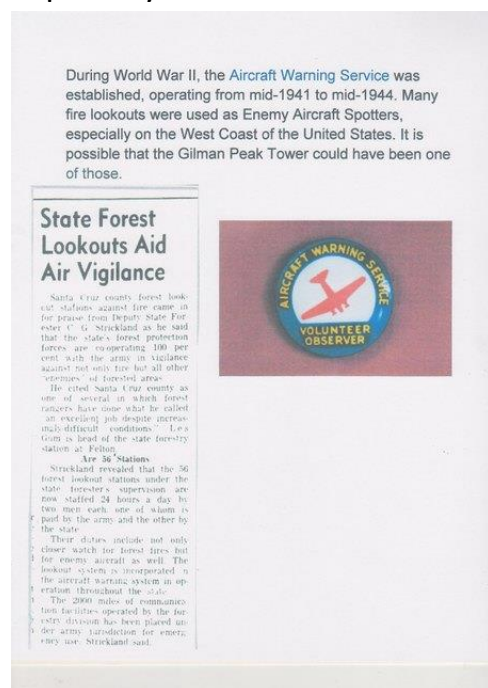
Harvey George French



HARVEY GEORGE FRENCH was born on September 12th, 1916 to Albert James and Mabel Belle French in the town of Orosi in Tulare County, California. Harvey's last living family member is his sister, Lois Bryant, of the Salton Sea, where she lives with her husband, Chester. In 1936 Harvey graduated from Fullerton High School and started with the California Division of Forestry as a seasonal firefighter. Then in 1942 Harvey went into the Marines and faithfully served his country for 4 years. On February 6th, 1945 Harvey married the love of his life, Cheryl Cummins. Harvey came back to the California Division of Forestry, was promoted to Captain, and then Battalion Chief for the Perris and Elsinore areas. After serving 34 years in the Fire Department and 4 years in the Marines, Harvey retired from CDF on December 30th, 1974. In 1999, after 54 years of marriage, Cheryl, the light of Harvey's life, died and was laid to rest at the Perris Valley Cemetery. Harvey continued to live in the house they built in Lake Elsinore until around 2005 when he moved into the Murrieta Gardens Senior Living in Murrieta, where he built a large following of many friends and caretakers. On Thursday, October 13th, 2011, at around 10:30pm, Harvey went to sleep and moved on to his Eternal Life with his Lord. He now lives for eternity with Cheryl, the love of his life. There will be a Memorial Service honoring Harvey French on Saturday, November 5th, 2011 starting at 10:00am at the First Congregational Church of Perris, located at 100 North "A" Street, Perris, CA 92570. In lieu of flowers the family requests donations in Harvey's name be sent to the CDF Fire Museum, 3500 Sierra Way, San Bernardino, CA 92405, (909) 881-6984, www.cdfmuseum.org Evans-Brown Mortuary 128 E. Graham Ave., Lake Elsinore (951) 674-3141

with his wife, were featured in a 1938 article in the LA Times. He described getting two days off each being glad to get back to their feeling that their job was best in the world.” Their Tower living space was the tower cab, perched 30 feet in only link to the outside world telephone line to State Forest Scherman, 18 miles away. water and groceries were occasionally by State Forest trucks.

WWII brought about a new in fire lookout history. In Army Air Force began utilizing



month but peak and “almost the Gilman Peak 14’ x 14’ the air. Their was a private Ranger Joe Drinking brought in Service

development 1942, the fire lookouts,

more watchers scanned the sky for potential enemy aircraft from each lookout tower 24 hours a day, 365 days a year until the war ended. Although not verified, it is possible that the Gilman Tower could have been used by the Aircraft Warning Service.

When the US entered WWII, many of our males were no longer in the workforce. Females began to do what were traditionally “male” jobs, including those of fire lookouts. Gray-haired Mrs. Lois Smith came to the Gilman Peak Station in the early 1950s, but she was already a seasoned veteran, having spent a total of six

years in other fire lookouts before her husband died. She described having many animal visitors, including deer, rabbits, and quail and, even though it “gets a little lonesome”, she said she likes it. She, as well as all the fire lookouts, needed to be

adept at using an Osborne fire finder in order to get a “fix” on the exact location of a fire.

LOIS SMITH GILMAN PEAK LOOKOUT 1950s-1960s

Mrs. Lois B. Smith
atop Gilman Lookout



Lois Smith. A full-time paid lookout for the county for several years during the 1950s-1960s. Smith and the other lookouts tended the towers during fire season, which runs from June through October. They would work 10 days on, 5 days off.



Mrs. Smith demonstrates operation of the Osborne Fire Finder, by which she can get a “fix” on exact location of fire by a cross check with other fire spotters.

William Wolf was Gilman Peak bachelor. His dates had he been a 1955, he might the Chino and visited the Gilman with Ranger Art top and getting a and an explanation they descended, returned home.

OSBORNE FIRE FINDER



A fire lookout demonstrates use of the Osborne Fire Finder

different. In case of a fire, the state lookout at Gilman Peak, near Los Angeles, and the federal lookouts at Santiago and Buena Vista, please phone warning to headquarters in Orange. The man on duty there gives in a wall map and pulls strings.

On the map each lookout is marked and a string hangs from each. Each string is pulled to line up with the bearings given by the lookout at the direction of the fire. Where the strings cross on the map is the location of the fire. Lots of time looking it takes to read.

yet another lookout for the Tower. William was a of service are unknown but, lookout on the 21st of April, have welcomed the visit from Olinda Cub Scouts who Fire Lookout that day, along Josso. After climbing to the tour of the living quarters of the duties of a fire lookout, ate lunch, took a hike, and

In June of 1953, husband and wife team, David and Myrtle McKenzie were the lookouts for Gilman Tower. As stated previously, the tower had a lone phone line to the Yorba Linda state forestry station, on which they were to check in daily. After they failed to check in on that June day, the station foreman drove up to the tower and found them both unconscious with

SOME OF GILMAN PEAK FIRE LOOKOUTS OVER THE YEARS:		
Buell Castile	1935	
Harvey George French	1936	
Glenn Downer (and wife)	Late 1930s	
William Wolf	1950-ish	
David/Myrtle McKenzie	1953	(David died in tower)
Lois Smith	1954	

**Note that this is probably not a complete list and that these dates are all approximations deduced from reading various newspaper articles.

the doors
and
windows
closed,
apparently
the victims
of carbon



monoxide poisoning from a gas appliance. Myrtle lived, but David did not survive. So, there were many fire lookouts who worked over the years in the Gilman Peak Tower.

The future of the fire lookout towers was not a bright one. Beginning in the 1960s, the lookouts began to be phased out. There was more emphasis on using airplanes and helicopters for fire detection and suppression. A new “let burn” policy was in effect in many wilderness areas. And, there were growing numbers of forest visitors whose eyes could be used for early detection.

All these factors, plus state budget cuts led to the demise of the lookout towers. In 1967, there were no funds in the State budget for the operation of Bolero Peak Station nor for Gilman Peak Station, and they were both closed.

Ironically, there was to be a disastrous fire in the very-near future. In late October 1967, the Paseo Grande fire broke out in Corona, just east of the closed Gilman Peak Fire Lookout, which would have been closest to the point of origin of the

One man's effort to save towers

For the past five years, Mark Thornton, a former U.S. Forest Service firefighter, has traversed California visiting the more than 270 fire towers dotting the state's forests.

He has collected folklore for a book he is writing, along with historical data that he hopes will prevent some of the lookouts from being demolished.

"My personal goal is to see to it that two dozen lookouts are saved so they never disappear," said Thornton, 31, who lives in Groveland, near Yosemite National Park.

Thornton has received the blessing of the U.S. Forest Service, which is paying his traveling expenses. Although he has no degree in history or engineering, he quickly won the confidence of Forest Service officials.

"You talk to him three minutes and you're sold," said Don Miller, U.S. Forest Service state historic preservation officer. "I'm sure the ones that are eventually saved will be a tribute to Mark."

Miller will present Thornton's recommendations on which towers should be saved to California's historic preservation officer. That officer may then nominate the towers for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Thornton said he would like to see at least one example of each of the various watchtower designs preserved for posterity.

Miller hopes that even more lookouts will remain, although he admits saving the towers is not a high priority for the Forest Service.

"California's an awfully big state," he said. "If there were one example in Southern California and one in 'Podunk' in Northern California, I'd be the kind of person to try and save both of them."

"Unfortunately, in some cases district rangers have decided for health and safety hazards they should be dismantled," Miller said.

Last month, the U.S. Forest Service tower at Cuyamaca State Park was demolished, much to the dismay of Thornton, who had asked local officials

to save it because of its historic value. The all-wood tower was built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

"I'm disappointed. I don't think it should have been torn down," said Thornton, adding that it would have been an excellent tourist attraction because of its prominent location in the park.

Tom Ralls, assistant fire management officer for the Cleveland National Forest, said the demolition was required by state officials. "CDF wanted to turn that area back to its natural state," he said. "They were pushing us to get rid of it."

And the cab portion of the tower was in fairly bad shape, Ralls noted. "It needed a lot of work done, and we don't have construction money to put into lookouts. You can't put people into a lookout that is unsafe."

Air pollution from nearby communities had rendered the lookout virtually useless for spotting fires, said Steve Gallegos, Cleveland National Forest fire management officer. It had been abandoned several years earlier.

The Cuyamaca site is one of six lookouts around the state that were torn down this year, a trend that alarms Thornton.

His study should be completed within two months — in time, he hopes, to prevent similar demolitions.

Miller, meanwhile, said he is considering other innovative uses for the nearly extinct firewatches.

One possibility is renting the towers during the fire season as summer hideaways, so they will not be the targets of vandals.

Some of the towers could be dismantled and donated to local historical societies, as has been done in the past.

"I'd prefer that 90 percent of them still be attached to lookouts," said Miller. "When you're in them, you can see forever."

— By Laura Kaufman



Who knew that Gilman Peak has such an interesting history? Wouldn't it have been wonderful if our Gilman Peak Fire Lookout Tower had been saved and were still standing atop the peak today?

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